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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002844

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: TALABANI DISCUSSES PKK, BAGHDAD SECURITY

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2768  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2323

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: In a meeting on August 6, President Talabani and the Ambassador focused on the PKK and improving Baghdad security. The Ambassador stressed the importance of not allowing the PKK to put the Kurds, achievements in Iraq at risk. Talabani assured the Ambassador that he, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Barzani, and the Iraqi Government were working together to resolve this situation. There had been some progress, Talabani noted: jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan had agreed to a ceasefire, the format for the Trilateral talks had been agreed upon, and unhelpful statements by the Iranians had been duly addressed. The Ambassador informed Talabani that a Special Envoy would soon be named by Washington to assist in resolving this dispute. On Baghdad security, Talabani informed the Ambassador that the National Policy Council (NPC) would meet on August 7, and that the Kurds and Shia had met separately to consult on how to improve relations with the U.S., and to encourage the Sadrists to continue integrating into the national government. END SUMMARY.

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Progress Report on PKK  
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[1](#)2. (S) In a meeting on August 6, President Talabani assured the Ambassador that some progress had been made toward resolving the conflict with Turkey over the latest provocations by the PKK. They discussed four key points:

-- SPECIAL ENVOY: The Ambassador informed Talabani that, the U.S. Special Envoy for the PKK and Trilateral Talks would be a distinguished person with a military background, since the Envoy would have to work closely with the Turkish General Staff (TGS).

-- OCALAN MEETING: Talabani clarified that the message from imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan supporting the ceasefire had been relayed by his lawyers, not conveyed directly from Ocalan to Turkish-Kurdish political leader Dr. Ahmed Turk as originally reported (see reftel). Talabani informed the Ambassador that Turk was working with the Turkish Government to arrange a meeting with Ocalan to confirm, and that the PKK leadership had requested that Turk deliver Ocalan's message in person.

-- CEASEFIRE: Talabani informed the Ambassador that Turk had pressed not just for a "ceasefire," but for an "end to the fighting." According to Talabani, Turk had claimed that if Ocalan did not say it, he would make a statement himself calling for an end to the PKK's armed struggle. Both Talabani and Turk made the argument that the Kurds across the

region had made significant political strides in recent years. Talabani stated that Prime Minister Erdogan,s government was the first to openly acknowledge the Kurds in Turkey, and expressed his concern that the PKK,s activities could jeopardize the Iraqi Kurds.

-- TRILATERAL TALKS: Talabani stated that Ankara had accepted a format for the talks: the Government of Iraq (with Kurdish representation), the Government of Turkey, and the U.S. would conduct the Trilateral meetings.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador stressed the importance of not allowing the PKK to put the Kurds, achievements in Iraq at risk. He also sought (and received) confirmation from Talabani that these measures had the full approval and cooperation of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Masud Barzani. The Ambassador stated that he would contact Barzani directly to reinforce the message.

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Iran Gets Involved with the PKK Issue  
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¶4. (S) Talabani informed the Ambassador that Iran had been playing an increasingly negative role in the PKK situation. Talabani said that he had heard the Iranian Ambassador to Ankara stating that Iran was encouraging PKK fighters to take refuge in Iraq. Summoning Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Khazemi-Qomi for a meeting, Talabani stated that he told Khazemi-Qomi that any trouble in Iraqi Kurdistan would inevitably spill over into Iranian territory as well. He warned Khazemi-Qomi that Iran,s actions threatened to destabilize the entire area. According to Talabani, Khazemi-Qomi then reported back to him that this was not

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Tehran,s policy, but Talabani insisted that Tehran make a public statement to that purpose. In true Iranian fashion, Talabani wryly noted, the statement was very "polite" - in other words, vague enough that Iran could not be pinned down to anything.

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Baghdad Security Issues  
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¶5. (C) Talabani informed the Ambassador that the Kurdistan Alliance had met with several high-ranking members from the Itilaf (Shia Coalition): Adil Abd al-Mahdi, Ali al-Adib, and Khalid al-Attiya. The first order of business, Talabani reported, was to determine friends and enemies. According to Talabani, the Shia agreed that the enemies of the Iraqi people were the Baathists and terrorists. Identifying the friends generated more discussion: all immediately agreed on the U.S., but the Shia stated the Sadrists were slowly integrating into the government and should be encouraged to continue, and the Kurds noted that the Sunni Arabs could not be seen as enemies. According to Talabani, there was eventually agreement on all points.

¶6. (C) The National Policy Council (NPC) would meet on August 7 to discuss, among other things, Baghdad security, Talabani reported. It was imperative to get the Sadrists on board, he said. According to Talabani, Sadrists allegedly kidnapped two employees from a diplomatic mission in Baghdad and later claimed it was done in error; this behavior needed to be stopped by Muqtada al-Sadr himself. As for the internal organization of the NPC, Talabani said that it was decided to select a General Secretary, but there was not yet an agreement on how to delineate his responsibilities. Talabani noted that he would convince former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi to accept this position.

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Shia Reaching Out  
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17. (C) Talabani informed the Ambassador that the Shia Coalition recognized that they had mismanaged their relationship with the U.S., and were eager to improve things.

The Shia claimed that the Sadrists needed to be encouraged to resume normal relations with the U.S. and interact more with other elements of the Iraqi Government. However, they noted that the U.S. should be willing to meet with the Sadrists and establish a working relationship with them.

Talabani informed the Ambassador that a joint Kurdish-Shia Coalition delegation will ask for a meeting with the Ambassador to discuss these issues.

KHALILZAD